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Pakistan Approves Hajj Reforms, AI Policy for 2025-26

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Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's cabinet has approved the Hajj Policy 2026, increasing the government quota to 70%, and the National Artificial Intelligence Policy 2025 to advance technological growth.

Islamabad, Pakistan – On July 30, 2025, the Federal Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, approved transformative reforms for the Hajj Policy 2026 and the National Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy 2025, signaling a commitment to modernizing pilgrimage operations and bolstering Pakistan's technological landscape. The decisions, reported by ARY News, aim to enhance efficiency in religious services and position the nation as a competitive player in the global AI economy, aligning with practical governance priorities.

The Hajj Policy 2026 allocates 70% of Pakistan's pilgrimage quota to the Government Hajj Scheme, with the remaining 30% designated for private Hajj tour operators, who faced criticism for past inefficiencies. Prime Minister Sharif directed the Ministry of Religious Affairs to fully digitize operations, introducing real-time payment tracking, digital wristbands, and an upgraded Pakistan Hajj mobile app for payments and complaints. Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, speaking to the media, emphasized that private operators must accommodate pilgrims affected by last year's failures at 2025 rates, with third-party validation ensuring transparency. The policy reserves 1,000 seats for hardship cases and mandates Saudi-approved vaccinations, with implementation starting August 4, 2025.

The National Artificial Intelligence Policy 2025, unanimously endorsed, targets training one million AI professionals by 2030, launching 1,000 indigenous AI products, and initiating 50,000 AI-driven civic projects. Sharif highlighted the policy's focus on empowering youth, stating that AI education is a national priority to enhance economic productivity. The policy includes 3,000 annual scholarships and an AI Innovation Fund to support private-sector growth, with measures to ensure cybersecurity and global-standard compliance. The Ministry of Information Technology will collaborate with other departments to establish an AI Council for oversight.

These reforms reflect a strategic push to streamline religious services and harness technology for economic progress. By prioritizing transparency in Hajj operations and investing in AI, Pakistan aims to address practical challenges while fostering innovation.